

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2022

Remarks at the Opening Plenary Session of the Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, California

June 9, 2022

The President. Good afternoon. Please, please, sit down. Well, welcome again to the ninth Summit of the Americas. A lot of hard work has gone into this summit, and a lot of strong and constructive diplomacy so far, I believe.

We brought together diverse voices and stakeholders and development [developed]* an ambition agenda and—agenda for action to address the issues that matter most to the future of our region. And they're not all the same concerns, in some—one sense. In another sense, they're all incredibly intertwined. I'm incredibly honored to be hosting all of you here in Los Angeles.

My administration and the proposals that we're eager to discuss with you were—we wanted to begin to talk about today—proposals that I think are a far cry from what we saw from a previous American administration. But equally important, we—the Vice President and I—we want to listen, hear all of you—what you think we should be doing.

The next few days, we have an opportunity to find ways we can do better for all of our people by working together. And I emphasize "together." Together. That's what our people expect of us. And it's our duty to show them the power of democracies to deliver when democracies work together.

The United States stands ready to work in partnership with all of you—governments, institutions, civil societies, young leaders of tomorrow. And I invite my fellow heads of state and heads of government of the Americas to join me in adopting concrete hemispheric commitments that are going to advance our efforts to build a more sustainable, resilient, and equitable future.

With our Action Plan on Health and Resilience, we're going to help our region recover from COVID-19, while strengthening health systems, improving our ability to respond to future health emergencies by investing in health workers.

The new Americas Health Corps will train 500,000 public health and medical professionals in the region over the next 5 years. The United States is going to fund this together with the Pan American Health Organization so when the next pandemic hits, which it will, we'll be ready and trained health care workers to administer the vaccines and the needed care, which we don't have now. And it won't cost your countries anything.

Through our efforts to strengthen clean energy economy in the Americas, we're committing to just—not just an energy transition, but to make communities that have been historically marginalized are able to share equally in the gains, with equitable access to both good-paying jobs we'll create and the affordable clean energy that will be made available.

I'm going to continue to work, just as I did when I was Vice President with Barack Obama, to promote trade and investment in clean energy, including using the United States International Development Finance Corporation, to help countries that need assistance to access financing and to help the region reach ambitious renewable energy goals by 2030.

By adopting the Inter-American Action Plan on Democratic Governance, we will—we're going to commit our nations to making real the promise of the Inter-American Democratic Charter. And sometimes, we forget what it says. It says: inclusive democratic governance,

* White House correction.

transparency and accountability, protections for human rights of all people, respect for the rule of law. And on all these issues and more, the United States is making critical commitment to demonstrate our enduring investment in our shared future—and to address our shared concerns, because they are shared.

Last night I announced the Americas Partnership [for]^{*} Economic Prosperity plan to drive equitable economic recovery and invest in working families throughout the hemisphere. Today I rolled out a new partnership and collaboration with the Caribbean countries to address climate change. I just spent a little time with the Caribbean leaders. We have to go back and do a lot more and hear directly about their concerns and discuss all the ways we can move together, as they pointed out to me just an hour ago, with a sense of urgency—not years, not months, but soon. Soon.

We're making good on our commitment to vaccinate the Americas against COVID-19, building more than—giving more than 65 million doses that we've already donated to the region. Over the next few days, we're also announcing more than \$645 million in new lifesaving assistance to address food insecurity in the region and increase the ability to respond to disasters, as well as historic refugee and migration flows. Each one of our countries has been impacted by unprecedented migration, and I believe it's our shared responsibility to meet this challenge. And I emphasize "shared."

Tomorrow a number of us will join in announcing the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection. This will bring our nations together around a transformative new approach to invest in the region solutions that enhance stability, to increase opportunities for safe and orderly migration, to crack down on criminals and human traffickers who prey on desperate people, and coordinate specific, concrete actions to secure our borders and resolve the shared challenges. And tomorrow I'll be speaking more to this and laying out our commitments.

The bottom line is this: The Western Hemisphere is home for all of us. Back in 2013, when I was Vice President to Barack Obama, he asked me to lead our engagement with the region. And I said we should be talking about the hemisphere, and I made a speech back then, saying the hemisphere—we should look at it as a "middle class, secure, democratic" hemisphere—from Chile—"from Canada to Chile and everywhere in between."

Over the past decade, our region has changed. The challenges we faced have changed. And so, our policies and our solutions have to change as well.

But I want to be very clear: My fundamental view and my approach to the hemisphere has not changed. I still believe what I said then, and I hope that you do too. There is no reason why the Western Hemisphere can't be the most forward-looking, most democratic, most prosperous, most peaceful, secure region in the world. We have unlimited potential. We have enormous resources and democratic spirit that stands for freedom and opportunity for everybody.

And no matter what else is happening in the world, the Americas will always be a priority for the United States of America. So thank you again for being part of this summit. We have a busy few days and incredible opportunities ahead of us. So let's get to work.

And I'm now supposed to hush up and sit down, and we're going to have a conversation. Is that right?

Vice President Kamala D. Harris. Yes, Mr. President. *[Laughter]*

[The plenary session continued with remarks by several participants; no transcript was provided. The President then concluded the session with closing remarks, as follows.]

^{*} White House correction.

The President. I'll be very brief. I want to thank you again for participating in the summit.

I think we're off to a strong start. I heard a lot of important ideas raised. And notwithstanding some of the disagreements relating to participation, on the substantive matters what I heard was almost unity—uniformity: rational migration policy, doing something about the need to provide access to recovery and funding, a situation where we concluded that we must work on the environment and pay—climate change, and so many other things.

And there's no reason why the Western Hemisphere can't be the most forward-looking, most democratic, most open and peaceful secure region in the world.

We can lead the world and with the potential that exists in our people and our values. And so the way we achieve that vision, I think, is by working together. And that's what we're doing these last couple of days. It's going to take a challenge that's—impacts on all of us—and to unlock the opportunities and the benefits that are available. But notwithstanding the disagreements, think back to what we heard today. We heard almost total agreement on the substantive things that we should be doing.

So let's get down to real specifics in the next couple days as to what those substantive things are, how they're implemented, who implements them, how we agree on them, what differences we have on them, so we get down to, as the expression in English goes, "to brass tacks." There's probably a better Spanish or other phrase for it than mine. But get down to really what's at stake so we can solve some serious problems.

Thank you all, and enjoy the rest of the day.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:37 p.m. at the Los Angeles Convention Center.

Categories: Addresses and Remarks : Summit of the Americas in Los Angeles, CA :: Opening plenary session.

Locations: Los Angeles, CA.

Names: Harris, Kamala D.; Obama, Barack.

Subjects: Agriculture : Food markets and prices; California : President's visit; Coronavirus pandemic, international cooperation efforts; Development Finance Corporation, U.S. International; Diseases : Coronavirus, domestic prevention efforts; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies :: Promotion efforts; Environment : Climate change; Foreign policy, U.S. : Civil and human rights, promotion efforts; Foreign policy, U.S. : Democratization; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Foreign policy, U.S. : Peace efforts, expansion; Health and medical care : Preventive care and public health programs; Law enforcement and crime : Trafficking in persons, efforts to combat; Western Hemisphere : Americas Health Corps training initiative; Western Hemisphere : Americas Partnership for Economic Prosperity initiative; Western Hemisphere : Migration flows, international cooperation; Western Hemisphere : Summit of the Americas; White House Office : Vice President.

DCPD Number: DCPD202200502.